1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1



the two main social-religious communities. Northern 'Iraq belonged generally to the Sunni element in Islam, southern to the Shi'i, while in the divided central districts the Shi'a predominated. Their relations were by tradition and conviction uncordial, and their pervasive antipathy could turn to violence. There was little social admixture between them, and the Shi'is were, by their own will, almost wholly excluded from the system of education provided by the Sunni Government—and, indeed, from that Government itself.

The mountaineers of Mosul wilaya belonged to far the largest of the 'Iraq minorities, the Kurds. These formed a substantial part—perhaps a quarter or a third—of the whole Kurdish race, which occupied a wide belt from eastern Anatolia to and across the Russian and Persian frontiers: a territory claimed by fervid Armenians as their own, and covering five wilayas of Turkey, of which Mosul was the south-eastern. The Kurds formed a clear racial and linguistic block with a strong pride in past achievement and memories of princely independence. Convinced of superiority to Turk and Arab alike, they differed markedly from the latter in character, environment, and personal habit, but closely resembled them in a social organization which represented an identical response to similar social needs. Nomadism among them, with sheep and cattle in place of camels, was confined to a few tribes; but tribal loyalties prevailed everywhere, except when village or district interests, or a mere absence of leaders, had led to detribalization. About half of the Mosul sanjaq was Kurdish country, divided into the qadhās of Dohuk, 'Amadiya, Zakho, 'Aqra, and Zibar: the whole of Sulaymaniya sanjaq: and a full two-thirds of Shahrizur. Except for small sections with Shi'i or heretical leanings, the Kurds of Mosul wilaya were Sunnis of the Shafi'i or Qadiri sects. Their homogeneity in language and culture was less than complete: of the three traditional or mistily historical groups—the Badinan Kurds between the Greater Zab and the Van frontier, the Suran between the two Zabs, and the Baban from Lesser Zab to Sirwan (Diyalā)—the first differed in its Kurmanji dialect from the other two, who, in common with most of the Persian Kurds, spoke and speak the Kurdi or Kurdish which had never achieved literary status.

The tendency of the surviving Kurdish nomads to settle had long been apparent, but had still far to go; and the gradual encroachment by the hillmen on the nearest of the plains—around Arbil, and west of Kifri—was to continue, household by household, for the next half-century. By 1900 the freedom of the Kurdish valley dynasties, on any major scale, belonged to the past. Turkish Qa'immaqams and Mudirs, sometimes Kurdish by race, were

1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1



established at every qadhā and nahiya; and the Kurds, in turn, supplied many officials and soldiers to the Empire. The educated class, in contrast to the Arab provinces, was small; there was no Kurdish intelligentsia, save for rare individuals in exile; the educated Kurd in his home or in government service became, at this period, in culture and sentiment a Turk. Their tribal organization, on the other hand, with compact and barely accessible communities of a thousand to fifty thousand souls, was likely to conform to a government administration only if the latter were sympathetic, strong, and flexible. In fact, the tribesmen in wide areas still showed a far truer loyalty to their own leaders than to Turkish officialdom; they remained, by great majority, unassimilable and uncooperative; and the wholesale insecurity which resulted from their preferred way of life could not, it seemed, be reduced by any system of indirect rule which Turks would authorize or Kurds accept.

Sharing racial origins with these, the Yazidis resembled them in type and habit. Their main concentration was in the Jabal Sinjar, fifty miles west of Mosul, but their holiest place, Shaykh 'Adi, lay in the Mosul plain. Their numbers, never formidable, had been reduced by the active antipathy of their Kurd and Arab neighbours; it was excited by the outwardly churlish Yazidi character, still more by their non-Muslim religion of devil-propitiation—if their hotch-potch of religious tenets be rightly understood—and by their close community autocracy. Though they still refused equally subjection and assimilation, their long history of major revolt and violence was at an end. The Yazidis, alleged to be mere heretics, never formed a Millet (Milla) in the Ottoman Empire.

The Turkomans, village-dwelling cultivators without tribal organization, were found in numbers in the towns of Kirkuk, Altun Kupri, Arbil, and Kifri, in the villages (Qara Tepe, Tuz Khurmatu, Daquq) along the Baghdad–Mosul trunk road, and at Tall 'Afar midway between Mosul and Sinjar. These Turkish-speaking folk, perhaps descendants of frontier-guards placed there by 'Abbasid Caliphs, were famed for no special gifts or prowess, but had long contributed a host of effendis to the bureaucracy and enriched village and countryside by their quiet industry and sound sense. Some known Baghdadi and a few provincial families were of Turkoman blood. Their future history could be foreseen as one of gradual absorption in the Arab majority. The same was true of the small community of the Shabaks on the Tigris south of Mosul; they spoke a Kurdish dialect and were thought to profess a heretical type of Shi'ism.

If these Kurd, Yazidi, and Turkoman minorities were confined almost entirely to the Mosul wilaya, the case was otherwise with

1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1



technique included blackmail. Rickety boat-bridges served a dozen of the riverain towns. Street lighting consisted, at the best, of a few battered oil-lamps. Water was supplied by donkey-borne waterskins from the river, or from polluted wells in private courtyards; only in Baghdad was a single quarter of the town furnished by pipes with silt-laden untreated water. Municipal street-sweepers maintained some appearance of decency in the main lanes and bazaars, while filth and stenches abounded in the rest. Every town and larger village had cemeteries in its midst or on its fringes. Khans for caravans or wayfarers were found everywhere; hotels approaching the lowest European standard existed only in Baghdad.

Municipal administration was entrusted, save in unorganized villages, to a Mayor and his council. These functionaries, elected by procedures which could amount to Government nomination, enjoyed some local prestige; but their powers in practice were limited so rigidly that the local Governor in fact controlled all projects and all expenditure. Baghdad in the 'nineties was divided into three *baladiyas*, two for the left bank and one for the right. The Mayor was a member or nominee of one of its leading families or, rarely, a Government official. Municipal law was not inadequate, the code of taxation and procedure meticulous, its sphere of nominal activity reasonable. But in practice these administrations were corrupt and futile, and effective chiefly in providing a salary for a city notable and free servants for the local Governor. Nevertheless, pride of city was not lacking and schemes of town improvement were popular topics throughout decades of inactivity.

The picture of urban society of the period must embrace varying scenes. Baṣra with its miles of date gardens and network of tidal creeks, the activity of its riverain suburb—the sole seaport of 'Iraq—its daily contacts with Najd and Muḥammara, its rich garden-owning notables, its cosmopolitan merchants and agents, had a character unique in 'Iraq. Of the other towns of Baṣra sanjaq, Qurna was tribe-dominated, the growing village of Abu al-Khaṣib non-tribal, and Zubayr a desert-fringe town ruled by a hereditary Shaykh. Among Baṣra's leading families were those of the Naqib, and the houses of Basha'yan, Mandil, and Ṣani'.

Baghdad city with a mainly Sunni right bank and an all-Shi'i and largely Persian left, and its important suburbs of Kadhimiya, Mu'adhdham, and Qarara formed by far the greatest commercial centre in the wilayas. It was industrially important, administratively and militarily dominant. The city was mean, without modern improvements, without protection against river floods; it was adorned only by two or three monuments and mosques of interest and by the great shrine of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Gaylani. With

1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1



its greater society of high officials, its circle of famous Sunni Muslim families, its half-Europeanized wealthy Jews—the houses of Daniel and Sasun (Sassoon)—its doctors and lawyers, its men of affairs and their busy agents, Baghdad could claim at least equality with Baṣra in the vanguard of 'Iraqi progress. In both cities a small European society, led by the Consulates and predominantly British, maintained its comfortable homes, its clubs and sports, and found life pleasant.

Mosul fell far behind; lesser in status and remoter from Westernizing influences save those of French Catholicism, the city acted as entrepôt for the Jazira and the Kurdish highlands, and maintained a restless yet unprogressive atmosphere among its mixed population. Despite the dignity of the leading families—Pashas of the province in bygone days, the houses of the Jalilis and 'Umaris—and some Christian families of repute, it was ill famed for its criminal brawling, its fanaticism, and its dirt. Its dusty and treeless glare, subdued only by the smoke of lime-kilns, attracted few visitors.

In the lesser cities of 'Iraq, Arab or Kurdish, the atmosphere and condition of society varied widely with the environment. Many towns had no interest but that of staging-post for caravans, produce market for an agricultural area, fuelling point for river steamers, or cantonment for troops. Others had more individual character. Such were Hit with its industry of bitumen: Kirkuk and Arbil as main entrepôts for Kurdistan and nurseries of Turkish-speaking effendis: Khaniqin as the frontier post for Persia. Mandali and Badra looked east to Pusht-i-Kuh in much of their sentiment and interests. Sulaymaniya was the capital of the southern Kurds, and dominated by its oppressive 'holy' family of the Barzinji Sayids. Ḥalabja was the urban centre of the great Jaf tribe, as was 'Amara of the Tigris marshmen and Naṣiriya of the Muntafiq. Kadhimiya and Samarrā were eminent as Shi'i shrines and pilgrim-places, Ba'quba, Shahroban, and Daltawa as centres for the estates of the landed gentry. The mid-Euphrates Shi'i towns were suffering at the time from a tragic disturbance of Euphrates irrigation. On the upper Euphrates, settlements of the Dulaym were turning into villages or miniature townships. In the qadhā headquarter towns of Mosul province—'Aqra, Dohuk, 'Amadiya, Zakho, Raniya, Rawanduz, Keui Sanjaq—urban life was developing and a class of town notables, sometimes religious, was holding its own against the tribal Aghās.

Yet more particular was the function of the Euphrates Holy Cities, Karbalā and Najf. These were at once the twin hearts of 'Iraqi Shi'ism (the greatest non-Turkish influence in the territory) and centres of the pilgrim and corpse-burial industries. The power

1: Longrigg G-4, 5 (ca. 1915-1940) MH1 Iraq MH1



stock-in-trade and monopoly of the Shi'i 'alim and mujtahid, who claimed on this basis to lead tribe and town in all secular affairs.

## 5. 'IRAQ SOCIETY: THE TRIBES

If elements of comparative social progress were to be found in the towns, how far did the great majority of the inhabitants outside still live in a world remote from change?—a world in which a particular range of inherited ideas, repugnances and loyalties obtained: where the manners and restrictions of urban life were unknown: where social observances, marriage and kinship, and the settlement of feuds had their traditional rules, unknown to Turkish law, and the desert virtues of hospitality and gallantry had their own interpretation. This detached specialized world surrounded, on every hand, the towns and greater villages of 'Iraq, dominated all communications, held nine-tenths of the cultivated land. The tribes, homogeneous in code and outlook and each the focus of intense loyalties, differed among themselves in important respects. Of the Arab tribes, roughly half were Sunni, half Shi'i; some, notably the Muntafiq confederation, were Shi'i with a Sunni ruling family; others contained sections of both the faiths. In Kurdistan Shi'i tribes were rare and, in places, suspected of deeper heresy. Such difference of religious allegiance was reflected in the extent to which the Shi'i tribes could be influenced by the mujtahids, and in the Sunni respect for the person of the Caliph. To the statesmen of Turkey the Shi'i sympathies of half 'Iraq were an offence and embarrassment.

The environment of the tribe affected not only its economics but its mode of life. The Kurdish nomads moved among settled folk; the desert Arabs abode in their own empty isolated world, from which arose their mental remoteness, their inaccessibility to Government forces, but also their vulnerability through dependence on the markets of the desert fringes. Such were the Dhafir of south-western 'Iraq, the 'Aniza of the Shamiya steppe, the Shammar of the upper Jazira, and smaller groups within 'Iraq. The environment of the settled cultivating tribes varied according to the irrigation method whereby they cultivated, and by the nature of their crops: the fruit or tobacco grower of Kurdistan, the wheat and vegetable grower of Samarrā were different enough from the date gardener of Ba'quba or the Shamiya, or the rice-field workers of the Albu Muḥammad or the Fatla. These folk were 'ignoble' in the eyes of the 'noble', feckless, starving aristocracy of the desert. Of the tribes of every type, the origins were at least as various as their environments, but less easy to formulate. In them all, the vital unifying and loyalty-evoking element was the name itself, and the complex of shared traditions for which it stood; but the how

2: Dowson G-5 (1929-30) 1932 MH Iraq MH



423 But occupying cultivators in the South, while recognising tribal
579 allegiance and the State's legal ownership (raqaba) of the land, commonly regarded their tribal group as possessors of the soil by immemorial right, whatever the period of its occupancy of the land might in fact be. They frequently resented any demand for mallakiya, and indeed any claims to overlordship other than those of the State. It should not be assumed that in such disputes one side was invariably unjustly acquisitive or the other side obstinately recalcitrant. Each party doubtless thought that substantial justice lay on its side. Circumstances alter cases and it is neither possible nor useful to generalise on the point. It is the removal of the injury caused by these longstanding differences, alike to agricultural prosperity and to public peace, that is the objective, not the justification or satisfaction of particular disputants. As is well known this need was so strongly impressed on Government by recurring violence along the Hai and in the Muntafiq, occasioned by the perennial disputes arising out of the differences mentioned, that a law regulating the investigation and settlement of the conflicting claims in these areas was enacted two years ago and is now in course of application.*

621 In the northern rainfall zone the people generally lived in regular
622 villages, under the shadow of a local *agha* or other notable, and cultivated
423 the soil and pastured their flocks round about. As there was ordinarily
178 more land than men to till it, land was brought under cultivation as required and successive generations commonly tilled the same groups of parcels, alternating fallow with sown. When necessary, the local leader became the intermediary between the people and any central Government that could make itself felt. Thus he compounded for the village tithe ('ushr) and collected appropriate contributions from the cultivators. He settled land disputes in village conclave or otherwise, and his jurisdiction to do so was of no material importance so long as these mediæval conditions prevailed. As civilisation developed, towns became more attractive and communications improved, such local leadership sometimes tended to become absentee landlordship; while with the introduction of tapu tenure many village areas appear to have been wholly or partially registered as the personal possessions of local notables, without any consideration of the immemorial rights of those who had regularly occupied and tilled the land or pastured their flocks thereon. The pinch in these cases seems to have been mainly felt when the lands were pledged, and forfeited, to town-dwelling merchants for debt. The personal touch and interdependence that existed between even the most arbitrary local chieftain and the village cultivators appears not infrequently then to have been replaced by more mechanical efforts to exploit the land from outside and by obstruction to such efforts from within.

423 These generalised instances are only intended to serve as illustrations of the evil effects of granting tapu tenure in the past without a thorough study and due safeguard of previously existing rights. No comprehensive or detailed study of these cases is possible here.

5. When the maps from which Plates I and II were prepared were in process of compilation the Tapu Department did its best to show the location and extent of all land held under tapu tenure. Partly owing to the destruction of records by the retreating Turks, but much more owing to the inherent defects of their Land Registry methods, it was not found possible generally to do more than indicate approximately the outside limits of patches of territory thought to be affected. The maximum limits of these groups of territory will be seen, on reference to Table I, to cover about 40,000 square kilometres. It is impossible to say what proportion of the areas included would prove upon due investigation to be reasonably entitled to be held in tapu tenure.

*Law for the settlement of disputes of Muntafiq Lands. No. 23 of April 4, 1928.

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Iraq MH1

[Marsh Arabs]



501 erable skill to navigate. They are capable of great speed and are driven either by a sail or by oars as the occasion requires. To a stranger they seem very unstable, but the Marsh Arab, who has practically lived in them ever since he was a baby, finds them abundantly stable and perfectly safe.

342 From a distance the houses occupied by these people are very picturesque. The reeds that grow in great abundance in the marshes of Lower Mesopotamia are gathered and when dry are tied in great bundles perhaps two feet in diameter. They are ten to fifteen feet tall or even more, and two bundles tied together at the tops are bent over to form an arch. Each of these arches forms one of the ribs of the house. They are placed every four to six feet, giving an air of solidity and dignity to the structure that is most unusual for this sort of simple architecture. Over these ribs a mat roof is constructed which is surprisingly tight even in the heaviest rains. The houses vary in size, and the largest ones, which serve as guest halls for the sheikhs and the rich, may be seventy-five feet long and twenty feet broad.

423 621 This agricultural district is peculiar in that while it has a settled community engaged in agricultural pursuits, there is no private ownership of land. The Marsh Arabs form a group almost untouched by Europeans. In the one district we visited all land is owned by the government, in this case a sheikh far removed from the district.

427 651 425 The only tax that he levies is a moderate rental for the land. Apparently there is little difficulty in getting land; at least no one complained of any trouble of that sort, nor does there seem to be any difficulty in keeping the same plot of land indefinitely if the cultivator wishes to do so.

000 The local governor is an efficient and more or less benevo-

20: Hourani S-5 (1945) 1947 M1 Middle East
Iraq MH1



to extend and improve the cultivation of the land and raise the standard of living. This had serious consequences when the war came and brought with it urgent economic problems. The mountain districts did not produce enough cereals to feed the population, and importation on an adequate scale was rendered difficult by the poverty of the Kurdish peasants, the lack of a food-supply organization and the insufficiency of transport. The sense of grievance was further stimulated by the example of the Kurds in Persia, who had thrown off the authority of the Persian Government since the Allied occupation of 1941. In 1943 Mulla Mustafa, the brother of Shaikh Ahmad, rose in revolt in the Barzan district. His rising lasted for several months. Attempts to suppress it failed and it was finally called off after negotiations, and an undertaking by the Government to look into Kurdish grievances. Majid Mustafa himself a Kurd and a distinguished administrator, was appointed Minister without Portfolio with the special duty of devoting himself to Kurdish affairs. His report outlined a scheme of economic and administrative reforms. In the course of 1944 little was done to carry out these or any reforms, and Mulla Mustafa's movement still smouldered; the condition of the Kurds was somewhat improved, however, by the increased cultivation of tobacco, their most important cash-crop.

563 668 511

*The Assyrians*

The Assyrians form a distinct community, not only by reason of their Nestorian faith, but also through their language, a Syriac dialect, and their traditions. They are probably the descendants of tribes which moved from the plains of Iraq into the mountains to the north during the period of the Mongol invasion, and remained there until the present generation. In their mountain-home they lived as shepherds, feudally organized under their *maliks* with their Patriarch, the Mar Shimun, as their temporal as well as spiritual ruler. They paid a yearly tribute to the Ottoman Sultan, but were in practice autonomous, although their autonomy was always subject to interference by their neighbours the Kurds.

563 621

At the beginning of the First World War they were divided into three main groups: first, the mountaineers in the Hakkiari district of what is now Turkey; secondly, those in the plains to the west of Lake Urmiyah, in Persia; and, thirdly those in the

563 166

25: Warriner S-5 no date 1948 M1 Middle East
Iraq MH1



prosperity of the main national industry and the welfare and contentment of the people as a whole.'[1]

There are different varieties of tenure in the two zones, determined by the different conditions of agriculture. In the north, the forms of tenure are similar to those of Syria, with a class of small proprietors taking some, but not all, of the land. In the south large owners or sheikhs own virtually all of the land, letting it to share-tenants, through a series of intermediary lessees, minor sheikhs, sirkals (formerly sub-sheikhs), or town notables. At the bottom of this many-storied building the fellah cultivates the land under a burden of debt. This peculiar form has originated from the disintegration of the tribal system; the sheikhs have profited by the confusion of the law to secure individual ownership of land which by custom is the property of the tribe.

*The Breakdown of the Tribal System.* In the irrigation zone, the practice of shifting cultivation was accompanied until very recently by an equally unstable form of landownership. The basis of the ownership is the tribal *dirah*, a large area not limited to land actually tilled but including also non-cultivated land and submerged marsh land, over which a tribe exercises a customary right of occupation. These areas are considered to be the property of the whole tribe, and until recently were so in fact.

The tribal system existed generally until some forty years ago, and still prevails in parts of the country.[2] Under this system, the usual procedure was to set aside a part of the cultivated area, a third or even a half, to provide revenue for the sheikh to discharge his political duties, which then included the maintenance of a tribal militia, the provision of hospitals, and keeping the *mudhif* (the coffee shop and civic and social centre of the tribe). This revenue accrued to the office of the sheikh, and not to his person. The rest of the land was sometimes distributed among the families of the tribe, according to the numbers of fighters who had helped to seize the land from another tribe, or according to the amount of land reclaimed: more often, however, the land was cultivated in small groups, the tribal sub-

[1] op. cit., p. 33.

[2] For a detailed account of the historical development of Iraq's land tenure system, see Salih Haider 'Land Problems of Iraq' (London University Ph.D. thesis, 1942).

25c Warriner S-5 (to date) 1948 MI Middle East
Iraq MH1



sections or clans, under the direction of the sirkal, the head of the clan, who organized the members of the tribe on a share-cropping basis, the peasants generally taking a half, two-fifths, or a third of the produce.

But even on these individual holdings communal ownership is manifested in several ways: for instance by the fact that sub-tribal chiefs can be shifted from their holdings by the tribal chiefs; by the right of pre-emption and veto exercised by the tribe over transfer of land from one member to another, and especially to outsiders; the fact that women are excluded from inheriting land; the moral duty of employing members of the tribe in preference to outsiders; and in certain parts of the country, reallotment of the land on the *mushaa* system.[1]

The method of farming necessitates the existence of some measure of communal cultivation and ownership. Cultivation by irrigation involves many duties which cannot be performed by one household—the clearance of canals, the building of dams across channels, and the strengthening of the river banks; all these functions require tribal organization. Hence the head of the clan, the sirkal, was originally a manager on behalf of the tribe; he employed the peasants and divided the land among them into plots to support them until the harvest, appointed the dates of sowing, harvesting, and threshing, and organized irrigation and canal clearance.

Thus, although the tribe exercises a right of occupancy over the tribal *dirah* and can prove occupation of the whole area, it cannot be proved in the same sense that the peasant has a certain plot of his own occupied for a number of years. Within the tribal *dirah*, the area cultivated by each group shifts as canals silt up and the land is impoverished by salt, and so the area cultivated by each peasant shifts also. The peasants themselves are largely mobile, both within the tribal *dirah* and outside it; cultivation is rather half-hearted and grazing remains an alternative occupation.

It must be remembered that the tribal system, when it prevailed generally, had no legal basis, and no protection from the State; the tribe was, in fact, in itself a unit of political organization, and itself performed the State's functions. Within the

[1] From an unpublished report by Dr Salih Haider, on 'The Problem of the Land in Iraq' (1944).

25: Warriner S-5 to date 1948 MI Middle East
Iraq MH1



twenty-first part of the total. The position of the share-tenant in Iraq is much worse than that of his counterpart in Syria.

In the districts of flood irrigation the tribal system has disintegrated, but its superstructure, the sheikhs and sirkals, remains. Most of the political functions of the tribe have now been transferred to the State, and the only economic function now performed by the tribal authorities is the control of irrigation, digging of canals, and repairing of breaches, which is done by the cultivators under the direction of the sirkal who has become a kind of farm bailiff acting for the sheikh. Under this system the sheikh and sirkal take together up to 80 per cent of the crop, leaving the cultivator some 20–30 per cent.

This exploitation is possible because the sheikhs have succeeded in establishing, mainly during the last fifteen years, their title to absolute ownership of the tribal land by means of land settlement. Because in Ottoman times the cultivators had no legal title to the land which they occupied, the landlords were able, during the period of the mandate, to use their political power to secure legal title to land which was by custom and tradition the property of the tribe. In much the same way the English landlords of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enclosed land as their property which was traditionally common property, and ousted small holders whose title was based only on custom. As in nineteenth century England, the process is being hastened by mechanization, which gives the big landowners an advantage as against the small cultivator, and by inflation, which gives them the impetus to invest. The big landowners of Iraq are a comparatively recent creation, and it is the economic and legal changes of the past twenty years which have established their position.

*Northern Iraq.* In northern Iraq there is a different type of land tenure and fewer large landowners. South of Mosul, in the fertile Tigris Valley, where pumps have been installed, there is a tribal system resembling that of the south, and the land is owned mainly by tribal sheikhs and notables. West of Mosul, on the rolling uplands with poor rainfall, the land is also held on a tribal system. In this region in recent years there has been a rapid introduction of machinery; and the sheikhs are extending their power to acquire land. In future bigger imports of machinery will probably cause them to extend their influence